

Eulogy for Evelyn Jenkins

Evelyn was born in August 1930 in Newport, South Wales. She was not Welsh, despite being born in Wales, and having a Welsh surname, but something of the nature of the Welsh stayed with her all her life- her love of music. She was a skilled pianist, and throughout her life she encouraged a love of music in others, particularly in children, young people, and the students in her charge. Indeed she started up the Junior Choir in this church and ran it for many years. There is a photo of Evelyn and her Junior Choir in the St John's Centre. She was always very concerned to nurture the development of young people through music. In her last Head Mistress's report at her school in Hong Kong (of which more later), she wrote of 'the development of the school orchestra, a project I have long cherished.'

In 1949 Evelyn went up to St Anne's College Oxford to read History. She then pursued a career as a teacher of History, eventually becoming a Deputy Head and Head Mistress. It is clear from the testimonies of her former pupils that she was a gifted teacher, inspiring many to go on to study History themselves.

Evelyn came from a deeply committed Christian family background. In 1948 her only brother Derek, my father, with my mother, went out to India with the London Missionary Society. A doctor, my father was a Medical Missionary, and became the Medical Superintendent of a large Church of South India hospital in Neyyoor..at that time the largest medical mission in the world.

In 1956, the 26 year old Evelyn also joined the London Missionary Society, and went to Hong Kong as Senior History Mistress at Ying Wa Girls' School. After a few years she was appointed Head Mistress. It must have been very difficult for their parents..my grandparents...to see both children go overseas as missionaries, at such a young age! And this was before the days of mobile phones and plane journeys. Both destinations involved long sea voyages, and letters took a long time to

arrive. It testifies to the strength of their parents' Christian faith that they encouraged the vocations of their two children. My grandparents were pretty intrepid too, visiting both Derek in India and Evelyn in Hong Kong, which entailed weeks on board ship. I can just remember Evelyn visiting my parents in India when I was a child. Later, after my grandfather's death, my grandmother, aged 70, thought nothing of flying by herself to spend six weeks with her daughter in Hong Kong.

Once every five years missionaries came back to England on furlough for a year, but had to spend much of that year travelling around the country preaching at various churches, to let congregations know what was happening in the mission field. Evelyn spent two separate years doing this..on deputation, as it was called. Having to do that must have been quite a challenge!

Evelyn spent 16 years at Ying Wa school for Girls . The school had been founded in 1900 by the London Missionary society, and she was the last Missionary there. All the pupils were Chinese, and one of the school's stated aims, then and now, was to ' provide students with the opportunities to come to know and appreciate the Christian faith.'

It says a lot about the way in which she touched people's lives that a few short weeks ago, on the 28th August, her 91st birthday, she was visited by Angela Tang, a pupil of hers 54 years ago! She came with her husband, Ian, and they brought a home made birthday cake! Indeed, delicious home - made cakes regularly feature in both her pupils' memories of Evelyn, and family memories too!

She also received a birthday card from the 'class of 67' , signed by students from Malta, the UK, Canada, the USA, Singapore, Australia and of course Hong Kong.

The school have set up an online memorial page for her...some of the contributions are in the St John's Centre for people to see afterwards. She is obviously remembered by many pupils as young, pretty, lively and inspiring. It is clear that many former pupils came to visit her in Meopham when they could, and have fond memories of her cooking for

them, ...perhaps one of her legendary trifles, without which no family birthday would have been complete...and taking them to visit different parts of the country, including to Bath.

The school have couriered to me from Hong Kong a photo book in her memory...which can be seen in the hall .They will be holding a memorial service for her on the 17th of October, in Hong Kong, with singing by the alumni choir, which seems particularly appropriate.

The obituary the school has posted talks about her as a quick, sharp thinker, who was very lively. She apparently made 'bold forays into fun events such as fashion and pop music! 'And she also admitted male students for the first time into the Sixth form! The fact that Evelyn touched the lives of very many people, far and wide, is evidenced by the fact that when my husband Charles and I got chatting to a Chinese couple from the States on a train from Moscow to St Petersburg, the woman's face lit up with delight when it turned out that my aunt Evelyn had been her Head Mistress in Hong Kong!

On her return to England, Evelyn spent several years as Deputy Head at Hardenhuish school in Chippenham, a large comprehensive. I remember visiting her once in her office there, and remarking on a lovely picture of Chinese children playing that she had on her wall. She said that as Deputy Head, she often had to deal with matters of discipline, and she thought that seeing the painting might reassure some of the children who came before her. I thought then that this was quite revealing of the warmth of her character!

In her later years in Meopham, Evelyn played a full part in the life of this church. As well as running her Junior Choir, and singing in the choir herself, she was involved in establishing the Thursday Fellowship, which aimed to nurture the spiritual and social life of its membership.. serious speakers as well as visits to the pub, I gather! She had many good friends in the church, and used to go on holiday with Ada Taylor, or Trip, as she was usually known,

When the family organised an 80th birthday party for her in the St John's

Centre, eleven years ago, it was clear what a warm, close and supportive community this church provided. And her close friend Francis produced the most amazing music-themed cake!

She was always deeply involved in helping to run the yearly Indian Evening, organised by my parents, always an important date in the Meopham calendar, which aimed to further people's understanding of the medical work in South India, and to raise funds for it, by way of excellent curries, Indian dancing and socialising. Her job was usually to run the white elephant stall, a name which caused some confusion and amusement for the younger members of the family.

Evelyn was always very fond of dogs, and her pets were a great comfort to her as she got older. Jamie, Jenny and Jess, rescue dogs from Dogstrust, feature in all photos of Evelyn from the last few years. I think she must have made friends with most of the dogs in Meopham!

Evelyn leaves behind six great nieces and nephews, who all cherish fond memories of her from their childhoods. None of them will forget how seriously she used to take games such as Pictionary at our family Christmas parties - games had to be played properly and according to the rules! She always looked forward to spending time with the family, and loved the many happy Christmases she spent with her eldest nephew Paul, and his wife Gina and family at their home in Lenham. She will be very much missed.